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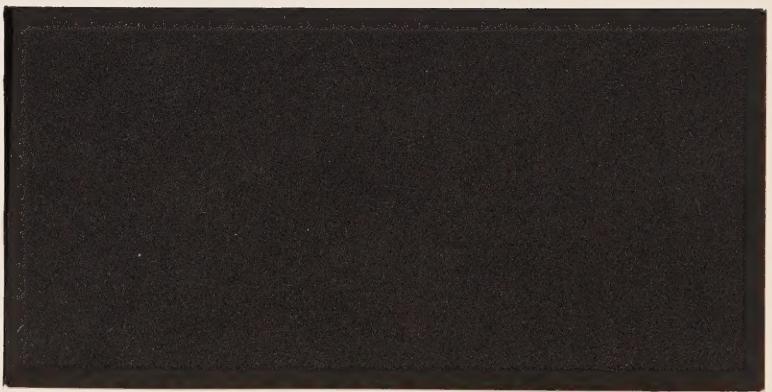
RESEARCH REPORT

Violence and Popular Music

by

Peter Goddard

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THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON VIOLENCE
IN THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

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* * *

151 Bloor Street West, Room 810,
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2V5

Telephone (416) 965 4593

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INTRODUCTION

Rock, the dominant form of popular music of the past 20 years was born out of discontent. It developed as a hybrid of two volatile styles -- white country music and black rhythm'n'blues which represented segments of the North American population that were generally excluded from the mainstream of popular culture. In the 1950s this hybrid was adopted by an equally volatile and, at that time, an equally ignored segment of the population--the young. Since then rock has become so diverse, embodying so many different styles and "substyles", that it can no longer be considered simply music for the younger generation. Nor can it be said that rock represents only youthful frustration, anger, defiance or anxiousness. Yet to the extent that it does express these feelings, it remains an aggressive kind of music.

This study is not concerned with the complete spectrum of popular music, nor even of rock, but rather with those elements which seem prone to violent effect: through the actual sound of the music, the content of the lyrics, the presentation on stage, or the way it has been packaged and marketed. This latter aspect is of particular concern because it involves, in varying degrees, the manipulation of the music's consumers. This manipulation itself is a form of violence.

Any study of popular music's relationship to violence must include some understanding of the music's relationship to the culture which spawned it and which it spawned in turn. As Griet Marcus has noted, there are several significant differences between the popular music preferences of younger and older audiences. The older styles, he points out, treated the lyrics as the basis for listening. The music was simply a cushion of sorts on which the words rested. The younger listener, he goes on to say, "lives mythically and in depth"; he sees his music "as a place of joy, a non-verbal celebration of the senses".¹ More importantly, this is a shared celebration. Marcus points out that young people will "quote lines and phrases from songs to their elders, but a shared understanding is rarely attained." The same lines, however, quoted to other young listeners "can stop whatever action is in process and return the group to the warmth of a mental community".

From this process, Marcus adds, has grown a shared body of myths. The music becomes "a metaphor linked to a private experience of the individual, and arises out of a memory, a feeling, or a state of existence. "The metaphors drawn from these myths "aren't just a matter of fitting the proper words to the proper situation, but of knowing the music is there, somehow, in the same place that the idea is". This is a manner of perception "that allows one to give mood and emotion the force of fact, to believe one's instinctual reaction more than someone else's statistical analysis or logical argument". Indeed,

it is the perception itself which "structures and rationalizes itself into a metaphor, not on the basis of a 'logical' relationship, but because of the power of music and song to reach into the patterns of memory and response."

Hence, what a particular song is about (its "meaning", "message", "statement", or "theme") can be, and often is, activated by something other than the lyrics -- perhaps by a particular phrase, a chord, a certain rhythmic pattern or by an interaction of a variety of these elements. Moreover this matrix of sounds may activate different responses of varying intensities in different listeners. A song's real "meaning" is thus interiorized and does not lend itself to verbal description. When Phil Spector, a producer of rock records, was asked about the meaning of lyrics, he replied, "It's not what I say it means, it's what it makes you feel."²

The relationships between various aspects of a song can be more important in delineating the song's meaning than the aspects themselves. An innocuous lyric can appear in a loud, aggressive, even hostile song; conversely, a lyric outlining some distinctly violent idea may be treated with a particularly pliant, and softly flowing phrase. Its often the distinct and ironic contrast between the content and the way in which it is expressed that precludes a song from being a call to violence. The song and its performance may be violent, yet the two together are understood by the audience to be only a part of an act. Iggy Pop, an American rock singer who frequently

cuts and bruises himself during his flamboyant performances, sees this act as "my personal environment where I can really express what I want to express. Outside of this environment, I think many of my ideas would be banned by society. But with my music all around me I feel safe to say what I want to say."³

Here a distinction must be made between rock acts and performances of other forms of music. A concert of symphonic music is an act of sorts, in which the music is presented to an audience; meaning is derived from the music. A rock act, however, is one in which the music is presented with the audience's participation: meaning is invested in the music. Thus, the rock act becomes an "environment" for the audience as well as for the performer. It is an act in which everyone participates. Popular music, then, must be regarded as a social as well as an artistic phenomenon.

The Pop Music Event

From its beginning, rock has been a communal kind of music. The first major rock star, Elvis Presley, developed his following initially through live appearances. The excitement generated by these performances, as reported in the media, created a demand for his records among those who could not see him live. Thus, a cycle was initiated: exciting concerts created exciting news events that increased record sales; these in turn guaranteed even larger crowds and more excitement at subsequent concerts.

This pattern has not changed. The marketing efforts behind the current best-selling group, The Bay City Rollers, were directed initially at television. "If we can show the kids out there girls screaming at the Rollers during a television show," said the band's North American promoter, Sid Bernstein, "the enthusiasm will catch on."⁴

A distinction must be made, however, between at least two types of pre-planned pop music events, and between the problems, even the violence, that each type has engendered. Essentially, it is a distinction between motives. While one kind of event has been promoted as a musical event, the other has been planned as a "scene" -- a "thing to do," or a "place to be". It is not my intention to detail the many incidents -- injuries resulting from the crush of a crowd, fainting, feet cut while walking on broken glass, bad drug trips, etcetera -- which have occurred throughout the history of pop music concerts. Rather, I intend to outline some of those events which were planned in such a way that violence was inevitable.

Rock Festivals

With the development of a new type of popular music in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and with the understanding of its extra-musical importance, a new kind of concert- and festival-planning emerged. This planning centred around the idea that the concert or festival should be an "event", one that was unique, and therefore important to the members of the pop music culture.⁵ Such an event would be seen as a symbol of this culture's communal identity,

just as the music itself would be a symbol of a listener's private identity. Thus, the early Elvis Presley and early Beatles concerts provided opportunities for fans to display certain communal characteristics, such as hair- or clothing-styles. Such was the success of the concerts that, in the 1960s, further concerts and festivals were organized as "events".

One of the first of these was the Fantasy Faire and Magic Mountain Music Festival held atop Mt. Tamalpais near San Francisco in June 1967.⁶ With profits from the event being donated to a ghetto charity, the festival attracted the free services of the Jefferson Airplane, The Byrds, The Doors, Country Joe McDonald, Dionne Warwick and Smokey Robinson. So successful was this festival -- some 15,000 people showed up, each paying \$2 -- that, two weeks later, a similar festival was held in nearby Monterey.

The Monterey International Pop Festival radically altered the nature of future presentations of pop music.⁷ Although only 30,000 people attended, it became the first true "media event" in rock, with 1,200 press passes being issued. The resulting publicity gave the Monterey festival an importance far beyond the quality of the music actually heard there. Janis Joplin, Otis Redding and Jimi Hendrix -- all three dead, now -- became international figures, the idea of the peace-loving "flower child" was popularized. A film version of the festival made the idea of large-scale gatherings all the more appealing. Moreover, although Monterey was a financial failure, it

proved to record companies, movie companies and other pop music insiders that considerable profits could be had from pop festivals and from other large-scale pop events. The very idea of a massed gathering was its own attraction.

Violence at Festivals

The "scene" provided a certain anonymity to its participants who felt they could function with more freedom in it and because of it. Clashes with society outside the scene, then, were inevitable, poorly planned concerts and festivals brought two opposing generations into direct conflict. This kind of conflict was evident at the Newport '69 festival held in Denver and Northridge in the same year, and at a concert given by Sly And The Family Stone in Chicago's Grant Park in July, 1970. Each of these events were held in an urban setting which, despite obvious advantages (easy transportation, housing, medical facilities, etcetera) created a number of problems. A variety of elements attracted to each event, including bikers, political activists, as well as freaks, took the opportunity to demonstrate their dislike of the system and its police. The police, in turn, tended to over-react when confronted by such large groups of volatile people. In a clash between the police and youth at the Sly And The Family Stone concert, three youths were shot and hundreds more were injured, including 91 police officers. There were 165 arrests, and numerous stores in downtown Chicago were vandalized. As a

result, all city-sponsored rock concerts in Chicago were cancelled, as were many other concerts and festivals around the country.⁸

Festivals became pressure points for the various factions participating in or wanting to make money from the rock community, with each faction attempting to use the festival for its own purposes. A coalition of 17 white and black radical groups made such demands on the promoters of New York's Randall Island festival that the promoters were finally forced to declare it a free festival. Subsequently, more and more fans came to festivals expecting to gate-crash. In addition, performers' fees escalated. Jimi Hendrix, who had received \$500 for appearing at Monterey, demanded \$75,000 for Randall's Island.⁹

Rock festivals were no longer merely events held by and for the rock community. They had become potentially profitable commercial ventures. This resulted in a particularly cynical process, through which promoters sold rock back to its own community, billing the festivals not as profit-making ventures, but as rock cultural events. As one fan explained during a Toronto rock festival, "I know I'm getting ripped-off, but I don't know how to avoid it if I want to hear the music."¹⁰

The media, too, have often been part of this manipulative process. The modest success of the Monterey Pop movie and the much larger success of the Woodstock festival -- a feature-length film and five

"live" albums -- indicated to the media industries that the audience for pop music was much larger than that which attended live performances. In a sense, the media began "translating" the pop music event for the mass audience. More and more concerts were staged as media events. Musicians like Alice Cooper and those in the band, Kiss, have designed their shows for either television or film, or both. It is the 1969 Altamont Festival, however, that provides the most telling example of manipulation of a pop event by the media.

Altamont: A Watershed

Altamont resulted from an attempt at pop music myth-making, an attempt to create a scene where otherwise none would have existed. The Rolling Stones in the Fall of 1969 were touring North America. The band intended to film this tour, which was to end in San Francisco, the highly-publicized centre of North American rock and roll. The Stones, however, were unable to obtain the necessary permit to play in the city. An alternate site, at the near-by Sears Point Raceway, was selected only a week before the scheduled event. Just thirty hours before the concert was to begin, the raceway owners, Filmways Incorporated, demanded exclusive distribution rights to the projected film of the festival.¹¹ The Stones rejected this power play and once again switched sites -- this time to the semi-abandoned Altamont Raceway which normally accommodated a maximum of 8000 people for

demolition derbies. The Stones' concert was expected to draw several hundred thousand rock fans. All of the construction that had been started at the Sears Point Raceway had to be dismantled and reconstructed at Altamont in only 24 hours and, because a movie was to be made of the concert, priority was given to lighting and sound equipment. As a result, the staging area was hastily constructed, the backstage area not properly cordoned off, and the stage itself was only four feet high, instead of the usual 10 to 20 feet.

To compensate for this inadequacy, a motorcycle gang, the Hell's Angels, was brought in to protect the stage and those on it. The gang, however, did most of the damage, fighting with people in the audience, with the musicians and, finally, amongst themselves. The band preceding the Rolling Stones, Crosby, Stills and Nash, finished its set at dusk. But the Stones waited an additional 75 minutes to allow for the use of the planned special lighting effects which would make the Stones' performance appear especially dramatic on film. The crowd grew increasingly restless soon after the Stones appeared on stage. A fight broke out and a young black was stabbed to death by a member of the motorcycle gang. As soon as it was known that the camera had managed to record something of the stabbing, Columbia Pictures offered \$1 million for the movie.¹²

Altamont proved to be a watershed for rock culture.

George Paul Csicsery wrote:

Altamont, like the massacre of Song My, exploded the myth of innocence for a section of America. As the country grows more sophisticated, it learns to confront its own guilt The media projected Woodstock. A great people event put on by the younger generation to celebrate its freedom Look at all the hippies, America. They're grooving while the rest of you schmucks have to watch it on television, because you're too uptight. The media needs hippies now more than ever, to show there is still someone in America who can dig on a scene. Altamont was a lesson in micro-society with no holds barred. Bringing a lot of people together used to be cool. Human Be-Ins, Woodstock, even a Hell's Angel funeral, were creative communal events because their centre was everywhere. People would play together, performing, participating, sharing, and going home with a feeling that somehow the communal idea would replace the grim isolation wrought on us by a jealous competitive mother culture. But at Altamont we were the mother culture. The locust generation come to consume crumbs from the hands of an entertainment industry we helped create.¹³

Rock as Revolution

Altamont became a symbol for the rock community.

As Sol Stern points out:

Neither Time nor Life, both orgiastic over Woodstock, carried a word about Altamont. Newsweek, which went ape over Woodstock in two consecutive issues, finally ran a story three weeks late; it was full of misinformation about the Hell's Angels and said almost nothing about the concert. The New York Times which had fully covered Woodstock . . . ran a short dispatch on the inside pages of its Sunday edition. The deflation of the Woodstock myth so soon after they helped inflate it, was apparently something the masters of the mass media were not up to.¹⁴

But for the rock community Altamont was the final confirmation of something it had suspected throughout the late 1960s. Not only had its sense of community dissolved through a variety of internal pressures, but what had once been central to the community, the music, was no longer within its control. As Jonathan Eisen noted just after

Altamont, rock festivals and rock concerts functioned as "counter institutions" where the so-called counter-culture could create its own authentic sense of community. Billed as tribal gatherings, they were "nothing more than very good reasons to forget that the real tribes have yet to be created and to forget the frustration and rage at not being able or perhaps willing to change any of the repressive conditions."¹⁵

These "counter institutions", then, became rallies for rock's messages. As Eisen wrote, "rock music for many, myself included, existed as instant revolution. Rock has turned on many people to the possibility of revolution, to the ways that the society comes down on people trying to have peace and independence of spirit."¹⁶ To others, though, rock's revolutionary message was muted. To John Sinclair, the political archivist who helped organize the White Panther Party, true revolutionaries "are not going to be persuaded by a joint and a V-sign . . . (the) 'owners' the people who control our lives and our destinies for the time being (but not for much longer!) are not going to be moved to give up their insane control and greed by a bunch of long-haired people sticking two fingers in the air and moaning 'give peace a chance', no matter how groovy or how right these freaks are."¹⁷

The distinction between Sinclair's kind of revolution and Eisen's is important to note.

Sinclair's is a product and a part of the stream of political activism that developed in the 1960s with civil-rights marches, the development of the SDS and

Black Panther parties, and the anti-war demonstrations.

Eisen's is a more passive kind of revolution and more symbolic in nature.

Disgusted with the straight totalitarianism of the larger society, many have tended to seek their own rebellion in terms of style alone. Seeing the conformity and the rigidity, the suppression of the unconscious, they have reacted with total freakiness. Straight equals bad, freak equals free and therefore good. This in turn has led to a permissiveness, an encompassing tolerance that puts the straight society and the pigs uptight. Doing one's own thing is really the byword for the culture.¹⁸

Hence, the cult of the outlaw, the Easy Rider, who lived by his own code; and hence the adoration of the rock star, who is living proof of the successful defiance of society. This cult, Eisen noted:

has grown in recent years as it has become apparent that much of what was considered criminal in the past must now be seen as justifiable in a society that is itself organized along criminal lines. . . . Nevertheless the outlaw cult, while potentially revolutionary has reached a point where it is helping sunder social fabric, but in potentially destructive, privatistic directions rather than in ways that can help accommodate new and more humane ways of organizing itself socially. . . . this violent individualism has frequently clothed itself in the rhetoric of rebellion and revolution and while calling for social justice it has been able to mask the more basic purposes of individual catharsis and private gain. I think that much of the hip movement in America today is largely an egotistical trip, fed by the music industry and glorified by its own ideology with an acrid strain of selfishness.¹⁹

Yet it is this very image, the rock'n'roll outlaw, that the recording industry continues to market. Michael Lydon wrote:

So the kids are talking revolution and smoking dope?

Well, so are the record companies, in massive advertising campaigns that co-opt the language of revolution so thoroughly that you'd think they were on the streets themselves. "The Man can't bust our music," reads one Columbia ad; another urged (with a picture of a diverse group of kids apparently turning on); "Know who your friends are. And look and see and touch and be together. Then listen. We do."²⁰

Even many musicians themselves realize the importance of appearing to be outside the "system". Terry Knight, a rock promoter and former manager of the Detroit-based band, Grand Funk Railroad, once ran ads showing all the negative quotes the band had received from critics. "They're establishment," Knight explained, "the critics, I mean. I don't want them to like us. Because kids hate critics and therefore will like us."²¹

The Industry

The music industry's exploitation of its music, its musicians and, finally, its audience has been consistent throughout the development of popular music according to Lydon. From the start, rock has been commercial in its very essence. It was never an art form that just happened to make money, nor a commercial undertaking that sometimes became art. Its art was synonymous with its business. The movies are perhaps the closest to rock in their aesthetic involvement with the demands of profitability, but even they once had an arty tradition which scorned the pleasing of the masses. Yet paradoxically it was the unabashed commerciality of rock which gave rise to the hope that it would be a 'revolutionary' cultural form of expression."²²

The recording industry whose earnings have grown from \$1 billion a year in 1968 to an estimated \$10 billion a year now acts as a filter between the musicians and their potential audiences.²³ To understand how this filtering process operates, one need look no farther than the very beginning of rock.

Rock, as noted earlier by Richard Goldstein, represents a fusion of white and black music. It is important to note just how both of these cultures found value in their respective popular music before this fusion took place. Prior to the emergence of rock in the early 1950s, music favoured by white audiences was less rhythmic in nature than that preferred by black audiences. There were also considerable differences in the way each culture approached lyrics and melody. In white pop songs, for instance, romantic or sophisticated sentiments were popular whereas in the blues, to use but one example, lyrics embodied the singer's own experience.

While the whole European (white) tradition strives for regularity -- of pitch, of time, of timbre, and of vibrato -- the African (black) tradition strives precisely for the negation of these elements. In language, the African tradition aims at circumlocution rather than at exact definition. The direct statement is considered crude and unimaginative: the veiling of all contents in ever-changing paraphrases is considered the criterion of intelligence and personality. In music the same tendency toward obliquity and ellipsis is noticeable: no note is attacked straight: the voice or instrument always approaches it from above or below, plays around the implied pitch without ever remaining any length of time, and departs from it without ever having committed itself to a single meaning. The timbre is veiled and paraphrased by constantly changing vibrato, tremolo and overtone effects. The timing and accentuation, finally, are not

stated but implied or suggested. The denying or withholding of all signposts.²⁴

Black popular music was a major source of material for the recording industry in the early 1950s, although most of the white listeners would never have known it. Through a process known as "covering", black hits were adapted and re-recorded by whites for a white market.

"Cover" versions like Elvis Presley's "cover" of Big Mama Thornton's Hound Dog not only out-sold the original, it also prevented the original from selling as many copies as it otherwise might have. In this way, the record industry denied popularity and, hence, financial success to the very artists who created the music.

It was the interest of white teenagers that first prompted the record and radio industries to become interested in black music. However, neither of the industries, which were both owned and operated by whites, was willing to leave this music alone. They viewed European musical values regarding tone, intonation, form, and overall regularity as absolute standards.²⁵ Musical styles which did not conform to these standards were dismissed as "bad musicianship". The black versions were regarded as coarse, rough and unsophisticated. The "cover" versions were "an improvement". Yet, in this process of "improving" a record, the lyrics as well as the music were changed. An early rhythm'n' blues hit, Work With Me Annie, with its hints of sexuality, became Dance With Me Henry. Whereas the original black recordings reflected an earthy reality, the white "covers"

emphasized popular romantic love imagery and themes.

This manipulation of popular music continues today. The specifics have changed, certainly: black music is no longer censored as it was in the early 1950s. This change is due mainly to the efforts of certain white musicians and deejays who directed attention to the original sources of the music they played, and also to the financial success of certain black record companies like Motown. Indeed, the reasons for the manipulation have been reversed. Now that the record industry is no longer attempting to suppress the so-called outlaw aspect of popular music, it seems all too willing to cash in on it.

Rather than being an example of how freedom can be achieved within the capitalist structure, the rock industry is an example of how capitalism can, almost without a conscious effort, deceive those who it oppresses.

Rather than being liberated heroes, rock and roll stars are captives on a leash . . . All the talk of "rock revolution", talk that is assiduously cultivated by the rock industry, is an attempt to disguise that plight.²⁶

Nor have rock stars been ignorant of this problem.

In his song, Maggie's Farm, Bob Dylan sings:

He gives me a nickel
He gives me a dime
He asks me with a grin
If I'm having a good time
And he fines me
Every time I slam the door.

Mick Jagger, lead singer and chief song writer for the Rolling Stones, wrote an attack at the record industry in his song Under-Assistant West Coast Promotion Man. While Roger McQuinn and Chris Hillman in their song, So You Want To Be A Rock'n'Roll Star noted:

The price you paid
For your riches and fame
Was it a strange game
You're a little insane
All the money that came
And the public acclaim
Don't forget who you are
You're a rock'n'roll star²⁷

The Musicians

Since Altamont, since the deaths of stars like Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Jim Morrison, all from drug overdoses, and with the disappearance of the sense of community that once surrounded rock music, popular musicians have begun to take a far more pragmatic attitude to both their careers and their public. Alice Cooper, for one, sees his function as producing entertainment for the masses. In the early 1970s, Cooper, who was born Vincent Furnier, claimed he was using a woman's name "because I want to make everyone realize there's some male and female in each one of them, that we aren't just what we seem to be."²⁸ Soon, though it became evident that Cooper's decision to blur sexual identity was less of an intellectual consideration than one designed for reasons of show business. His shows soon became more elaborate and gruesome, with mock-decapitations, a simulated hanging and a bizarre entourage of grotesques, including dancers dressed as spiders and a cyclops-like monster. "But it's just fantasy," Cooper

claimed. "It's just fun. What I'm trying to do is put on a show the way Hollywood did years ago. An extravaganza."²⁹

Cooper's success, however, created the need on the part of other entertainers to produce even bigger and more lavish displays. As was the case with the trend toward giantism in rock festivals in the 1960s, these more recent "shows" have all too often been produced without regard to their effect on their audiences. Sound systems have become more elaborate and capable of producing ever louder volumes, even though there is some question as to whether this volume may be harmful to hearing.³⁰ Ticket prices have escalated in order to support the costs of the equipment being used, with the result that many fans cannot either afford tickets, or cannot buy them because ticket scalpers have purchased large blocks of tickets to resell at further inflated prices. "And this is why you see so many fights at concerts these days," explained one 17-year-old fan at a recent Toronto concert. "It's become such a big deal, going to concerts, that everyone over-reacts. Everyone's nervous, you know? Everyone expects so much from it that they're on edge all the time."³¹

The Performance

This trend toward ever-increasing lavishness affects not only the externals of the show; the lighting, sound equipment, etcetera, the need to produce a radical concept behind each show has increased as well. Cooper's grotesqueries pale in comparison with those of the rock band Kiss. A typical Kiss show includes the four band

members strutting around the stage in tight black leather suits, each draped in chains and wearing jack-boots. Their faces are smeared in white paste make-up which gives them a skull-like mask quality. During each show bassist Gene Simmons makes lascivious motions with his tongue, seems to breathe fire and drools simulated blood on the stage. On a jacket of one of their albums, each member of Kiss has written a description of the way their music makes them feel; several of them mention the distinct sado-masochistic pleasures they derive from their costumes. Yet Gene Simmons maintains that "it's just a show. Sure, I know we've been called Nazi rock. But that's not it at all. Our fans don't see it that way, 'cause they just come out to have a good time and see a good show. We're just trying to put on the best show they've ever seen."³²

Kiss's image is directly opposite that of the 1960s rock stars. Those musicians dressed the way their audiences did, with long hair, beards, etcetera, and generally presented a soft, ill-defined image. Kiss, on the other hand, is "hard": their faces and heads are masked; their clothes are, in effect, uniforms. Yet the choice of this style is not accidental. As another singer, Rod Taylor, remarks: "Young people today are beginning to like this hard, uniform image; look at the trend toward short hair. People want discipline now, they want order in their lives. No wonder there's so much interest in World War II and the Nazis. It's not the Nazis who are popular but the ideas

of order and discipline." Taylor who performs as Roderick Falconer, has decided to exploit what he sees to be as an emerging trend. His recent United Artists' album, called New Nation, shows him in jackboots, striding as if on the march. He has also invented his own logo which consists of a metallic silver falcon surrounded by an oak-leaf cluster and standing on top of the planet. "All the ideas that came out of Woodstock," Taylor says, are false. The whole hippy idea was false, too."³³

Taylor's observations and feeling represent less a reversal of trends than a continuation of those which were started in the early 1950s along with the beginning of current popular music styles. Popular music has long been regarded by its youthful listeners as symbolic of its listeners' life-style, one that is quite distinct from that of the older generation. Naturally, if the generation which grew to maturity in the 1960s has retained some elements of the 1960s style (longish hair, leftist political sympathies), it seems inevitable that the new young generation would evolve a different and contradictory style. The young generation of the 1950s rejected the sentimentalism of the crooning, ballad style of the 1930s and 1940s in favour of something "tougher" and "more realistic". In the same way, the young generation of the 1970s is rejecting the sentiments of the 1960s ("love", "everything's groovy", "give peace a chance") and evolving its own set of metaphors and images.

The Music, Lyrics and Censorship

"If the Establishment knew what today's music was saying," one New York musician remarked, "not what the words are saying, but what the music itself is saying, then they would just turn thumbs down on it. They'd ban it, they'd smash all the records, and they'd arrest anyone who tried to play it."³⁴ Yet popular music in the past 25 years had indeed been censored or at least, restricted in ways that amounted to censorship. In Canada, not the least of these restrictions has been the dominance of a foreign-owned recording industry. The results of this domination cannot be accurately calculated, as they deal with matters of musical style, musical taste and, in a broader sense, the ability of a culture to see itself mirrored by its arts.

Since its inception in the mid-1950s in English-speaking Canada rock radio has featured records by American and British artists. In Quebec, there has been much less of an imbalance between domestic and imported music because of the language barrier. Consequently, popular music in Quebec has developed a more pronounced indigenous style.

To encourage both domestic artists and domestic recording companies, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) instituted "Canadian content" regulations in 1971. These required that a certain proportion of the music played on AM radio stations

be Canadian. This measure has been successful to the extent that several small, independent record companies, like True North Records and Attic Records, have survived and have produced Canadian talent. Unfortunately, the CRTC's regulations have not been able to improve the quality of the content, or the style of the music itself.

With few exceptions, most of whom come from Quebec, musicians who are supported by American- or British-owned companies (in short, the companies which control the market), are those who produce music suitable for the American or British markets. At best, this has produced a homogeneity of musical style and, at worst, a style that is directly derived from those found in the United States or England. For commercial reasons it helps a Canadian musician to sound like a Los Angeles musician, or one from another major music-producing centre; this will at least give him the ability to compete in these markets. The musician, then, censors himself, and the cycle that began in the 1950s, continues. As a result, the music heard in any city in English Canada is similar to that heard in any American city. Furthermore, since American bands like Kiss are likely to be heard just as frequently as Canadian bands, they become just as much a part of the Canadian audience's experience. Thus, Canadians are exposed to music that, were it not for the domination of the American recording industry, would not be available here. If the music is of a violent nature --

and in Kiss's case, it is -- this violence also becomes part of the Canadian listener's experience.

There have been more direct forms of censorship, the most common having been suppression or attempted suppression of song lyrics. It is significant to note that censorship has been exercised on lyrics dealing with the subjects of drugs and sex, and rarely on lyrics dealing with violence. In March 1971, a directive issued by the Federal Communications Commission of the United States called for at least one official in every U.S. broadcasting station to be responsible for the content and meaning of rock lyrics. Those broadcasters who ignored this directive invited the question "as to whether continued operation of the station is in the public interest."³⁵ One FCC Commissioner, Nicholas Johnson, dissented, claiming that the order was a "brazen attack . . . by a group of establishmentarians to determine what youth can say and hear."³⁶ Yet there were those who heeded the FCC. Gordon McLendon, an owner of a chain of American radio stations, tried to eliminate all songs referring to drugs from air-play on his network of 13 stations.³⁷

In Canada there hasn't been any such blanket attempt at censorship. "The CRTC has more or less left each station to be responsible for what it does,"³⁸ explained the vice-president of CHUM Radio in Toronto, Wes Armstrong. Still, when a record has been kept off the air, it is because of references to drugs or sex. Sometimes, though, suspicions of references have been enough. In the United

States, for instance, the program director of Gordon McLendon's station in Houston claimed that while musicians knew "what they're saying on those records, . . . old John Q. Public doesn't. We're tired of them putting it over on John Q."³⁹

It seems that the primary way the musicians were "putting it over" was through lyrics which were deliberately ambiguous, arcane or so slurred as to be inaudible. As critic Richard Goldstein noted: "Rock lyricists today try to invest their slang with a depth of ambiguity that allows the words to be heard equally well on all levels right down to the underground. No one doubts that the purpose of so-called psychedelic rock is to reconstruct an actual drug experience."⁴⁰ Yet censorship of ambiguous lyrics misses the point of the lyric's place in current popular music. As critic Paul Williams says in his book Outlaw Blues, "you can't hear all the words, so you can pretty much contextualize as you like."⁴¹

The relative importance of lyrics was discussed by Kent Higgins in an unpublished 1971 Master's thesis in journalism at the University of Colorado entitled "A Media Habits Pilot Study of Delinquent Children in Jefferson County."⁴² Higgins collected data about middle-class delinquents in a Denver suburban county and compared their views and uses of media with those of volunteers from the county's public schools. He noted that the majority of the "non-delinquents" favoured a song's lyric appeal while the "delinquents" tested in the county's detention centre favoured the song's beat. In noting

the appeal of the lyrics themselves, though, Higgins study came to several conclusions:

- 1) Relationships in non-delinquents' favourite songs were of the traditional stereotype of the love-marriage variety; relationships in delinquents' songs were frequently temporary and not often stereotyped.
- 2) Non-delinquents favoured lyrics about a team of actors, about a couple or several couples; delinquents' songs revolved around a primary actor;
- 3) Non-delinquents' songs were grounded in a "benevolent fantasy"; delinquents' songs were grounded in a "hostile reality".
- 4) Love and sexual anticipation were the most frequent goals expressed in non-delinquents' songs; emotional adjustment was the goal in the favourites of the delinquents.
- 5) The actors in the non-delinquents' songs were likely to achieve their goals and unlikely to encounter much difficulty in doing so; delinquents' songs frequently depicted stumbling blocks which the primary actor approached with a certain amount of fatalism.

6) Non-delinquents' songs tied the resolution of events to the kindness on the part of the actors involved; a percentage of the delinquents' songs saw either no resolution or fate being the prime determinant, with work and intellect being shown as the only possible means of success.

Higgins' study also noted that delinquents chose songs that were "a little more likely" than non-delinquents to be best-sellers; delinquents as a group seemed more well-informed about popular music than were non-delinquents; non-delinquent males and females were more likely to choose the same songs as favourites than were delinquent males and females; and delinquents placed more of an importance on music in their lives than did non-delinquents.

This study underscores, to some degree, the popularity of the "outlaw" image in pop music and the record industry's need to cater to it. It accounts for the constant regeneration of this image. As one generation of former "outlaw" musicians, grows older, richer and more a part of the middle-class establishment, another generation arrives to replace it, usually claiming an even "tougher" life style and offering a "tougher" image.

Punk Rock

The current claimants to this image are the "punk rockers". Punk rock, which started in New York, was

largely a "return-to-the-Fifties" manifestation. The bands involved performed a simplistic type of rock'n'roll and disavowed any kind of image except one of toughness. However, the English version of punk rock, played by bands like Clash, The Damned, Buzzcock, and the Sex Pistols, has caused the greatest furor. As noted by a Reuter's dispatch from London, "their sound and the way they play is not very different from the rest of British pop music. What is hitting the headlines is the remarkable appearance and aggressive behaviour of the punk rockers."⁴³ What has motivated this behaviour and appearance, according to the musicians involved, is the lack of "toughness" on the part of the older and more established bands. According to the lead singer of the Sex Pistols, who calls himself Johnny Rotten "what's happening now shouldn't just seem like a strong reaction against the music scene. It bloody well is. The old are scared of us. They don't want the change. It makes them irrelevant to what's going on now and they know it."⁴⁴

Yet the current notoriety of the Sex Pistols depends upon manipulation of the media and the media's willingness to be manipulated. The band was formed by a 30-year-old former art student, Malcolm McLaren. (He also runs a boutique called Sex that deals in leather and bondage clothing.)

McLaren encouraged the musicians he had brought together to write songs about their own experience. The results were titles like Anarchy in the U.K., and lyrics like

"God save the Queen

God save the Fascist regime

It made you morons into human H-bombs."⁴⁵

With the music has come a certain punk style, one that is intended to give a depth of experience to a live performance. The style, as described by Rolling Stone, includes "no drugs, but an overdose of booze. Hair: short and often dyed. Clothes: a bizarre cross-pollination of rubber and chopped, torn and remodeled jumble couture, whatever fit -- or, better still, didn't -- with chains, safety pins and Nazi insignias for jewellery. Clothes to match the acid, often bad-tempered atmosphere of the gigs."⁴⁶ At the first punk rock festival held in London (September 1976), the second night of concerts was cancelled when a girl in the audience lost an eye after being struck by a piece of flying glass.⁴⁷ As McLaren pointed out, "it's been overstated by the media. But what violence there is, is genuine. The business has taken music away from these kids and they are trying to seize it back."⁴⁸ The music business, though, does not entirely loathe punk rock. The Sex Pistols, for example, were offered a reported \$70,000 contract by EMI records even though the band had been performing for less than a year.⁴⁹ EMI later rejected the deal after a public furor generated by the Sex Pistols' use of profane language on a national television show.⁵⁰

The day after the show 1,800 copies of the band's single, Anarchy In The U.K., were sold. This was despite

the facts that the song was ignored by the BBC and that union labour at EMI's factory refused to manufacture the record. A scheduled appearance by this group and other punk rockers at the University of East Anglia was cancelled by the school's vice-chancellor on the grounds of "public safety".⁵¹

According to the Reuter dispatch:

In reality, the punks don't really care about anything, and politics is probably the least of their interests. If the British groups have anything in common, it is the boredom and anger created by a working-class background in a time of austerity and disenchantment with the current state of popular music. This last point is widespread and understandable. Since the advent of the Beatles, pop has moved steadily away from its working-class roots toward advanced electronics and other intricate forms. There isn't much for working-class youth in economically depressed Britain to identify with when they see the Rolling Stones, for instance, jetting around the world with brief stopovers for highly-priced and musically sloppy concerts. The punk rock groups are really just filling a vacuum." ⁵²

They're also offering comment on what they see as the safe, secure and middle-class world of rock. The lead singer of one Toronto band began a club appearance by extinguishing a burning cigarette on his arm and then asked the audience where it would like him to cut himself.

"It's nihilistic, sure," said a friend of the band. "But what it's saying is that we don't feel any more, or, if we do, the only feeling we have left is pain. It's like putting your finger in a light socket -- sometimes you get hurt, sometimes it wakes you up. Besides, it's a lot more real than Alice Cooper pretending to hang himself. It's a death trip, but for real."⁵³

The Disappearance of Romance

A recent thematic analysis of 772 rock songs covering the years 1955-1973 indicates that, to some degree, the disillusionment and violence of the punk rockers may be symptomatic of a broader trend in pop music.⁵⁴ The study conducted by Irwin Kantor produced nine categories of popular songs: love songs, drug songs, religion songs, comedy or novelty songs, "area" songs (those dedicated to a particular place, such as the Beach Boys' California-based surfing songs), revolution and social change songs, dance songs, advice songs and others. The years used as a frame of reference were divided into three periods: 1955-1963; 1964-1969; and 1970-1973. The results showed that the number of love songs decreased over this period, while the number of songs devoted to drugs increased. In fact, according to this study, a smaller percentage of songs were devoted to the drug theme during the peak years of the "drug movement" from 1964 to 1969 than in the year that followed. Similarly, there was a greater percentage in the 1970-73 period than there was during the mid-1960s when the protest song movement was supposedly at its height. Kantor analyzed the songs as media, or, in his words, as "information channels". However, he makes a distinction between two types of information channels -- one which he calls "discursive", meaning language, the other being called "non-discursive", meaning "those elements which cannot be overtly expressed, such as gestures, expression, connotations and mystiques".

In his conclusions about the trends of pop music he remarks that the 1970s period "saw a decrease in the use of love as a non-discursive element. Therefore, other non-discursive elements in addition to love were sought. Increases in drug use, religious cultism, and rebellion became manifest through rock music . . . or the teenagers of the sixties and early seventies, rock music became their saviour, through which they sought to alleviate feelings of despair, boredom, melancholy, and perhaps even hopelessness." 55

A pop song becomes a metaphor for the total experience of its listener; it may both recall and reaffirm latent images. Because popular music is generally experienced on a day-to-day basis through radio (and to a lesser degree, through concerts, clubs and festivals) any alteration in image is usually the product of an on-going process. The "cosmic storm-trooper" image cultivated by Kiss would not enjoy its current popularity had it not been for Alice Cooper's on-stage depictions of brutality. And Cooper's success with a visual treatment of violence would not likely have been acceptable were it not for the sheer power generated by the sound systems used by rock bands in the late 1960s.

This increasing emphasis on power, whether through the sheer volume of the music or through the image of a particular band, explains to a great extent why rock fares less well on film and television than it does when heard live. Rarely are the sound systems used in movie theatres

capable of reproducing the sheer volume of sound that is produced either on a home stereo set or at a live concert. Television sound is even weaker. Moreover, the image of a band is altered when it is reproduced on film or even live television.

Because both media place several controlling agents (whether a director, television producer or simply the size of the screen) between the act and audience, the feeling of the essential one-to-one relationship that exists between the audience and the performers at live concerts cannot be achieved. The televised or filmic image actually interferes with the appreciation of the performance. While simply listening to a record on a stereo set allows the listener's imagination to play with what is heard, a visual image on a screen curtails the use of the imagination. The stereo experience offers an alternative to a live concert: the film or television experience offers only a poor substitute. While rock stars like Alice Cooper and Kiss have appeared on television, the bridge between the mass television audience and the smaller, more selective rock audience has never been completed. And as long as the television audience is considered the audience that reflects the mainstream of North American culture, the rock audience, however socially stable it has become in recent years, will always be considered (and usually will consider itself), to be outside this mainstream.

Stylized Violence in Popular Music

An exploration of violence in pop music, whether the violence is stated or merely implied, must take into account both the sound and the lyrics. These two elements, especially when they are focused and fused by a live presentation complete with costumes, props and on-stage movement, present a total metaphor for the listener's experience. For the purposes of this paper, then, the violent aspects of popular music can be categorized as follows: 1) violence-as-art; 2) an appeal to and the appeal of "toughness"; 3) protest; 4) sexism; 5) pop music as a reflection of social violence.

Violence-As-Art

Various musicians, from singer Wayne Cochrane in the 1950s to Peter Townshend of The Who in the 1960s to Alice Cooper in the 1970s, have incorporated violent acts as a part of their musical presentation. Cochrane, for instance, continues to break furniture and glasses in clubs where he plays, although there is a clause in his contract stipulating that he pay for everything he breaks. Townshend once smashed his guitar at the end of every concert; Cooper was "beaten up" in a mock fight with other members of his band. Townshend best explained this kind of violence when he said:

when I was in art school [at the Ealing School of Art, in England], I got wind of an auto-destructive artist named Gustav Motzger. That really blew my mind! So I

introduced the idea of breaking up the instruments as part of the finale of the show; with puffs of smoke and flashes of light. The whole bit . . . Lots of people said, 'That's terrible,' and stuff like that. Some geezers thought we were cheapening our music. But it's not just the destruction of the instrument itself; it's destruction of what you're actually doing. You actually destroy everything -- you destroy the guitar, the group's musical line, you destroy the audience's mental participation . . . You see, it's a whole pattern of apprehension and tension, and then relief and the remorse. The whole process of life. The current big, imperishable, holy art is pop music and the break-up routine really says something about it. The ideal, of course, would be for me to get killed in an airplane crash right after a really stupendous performance."⁵⁶

This kind of stylized violence, which has included feedback being forced from the band's amplifiers, was more popular in the 1960s than in the 1970s. "Some would call such behaviour destructive," noted Richard Goldstein, who saw in it a "viable sublimation. In other words, it's a hell of a lot more useful than swiping hubcaps."⁵⁷

To a large degree, too, the sheer volume at which groups like The Who, Led Zeppelin, Rush, Aerosmith, Black Sabbath, Blue Oyster Cult and others play must be considered a stylized type of violence.

An analysis of a lyric used by any one of these so-called "heavy metal" bands reveals little of the song's total aural impact. The Who's song, My Generation, runs:

People try to put us down
Just because we get around
Things they do look awful cold
Hope I die before I get old.

This is my generation, baby.

Why don't you all f-f-f-fade away?

Don't try and dig what we all say

I'm not trying to cause a big sensation

I'm just talking 'bout my generation.

This is my generation, baby

My generation.⁵⁸

The pugnacious quality of the line "Why don't you all f-f-f-fade away?" is counterbalanced by "I'm not trying to cause a big sensation." Yet the music throughout, utilizing primary chords played extremely loudly, does indeed create a "big sensation". Yet the sensation of violence is more apparent here than any call to violence.

The Appeal of Toughness

Rock has long celebrated a tough life-style whether it be expressed through the love of fast cars, the ability to handle oneself in a fight, or one's ability to defy society. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, this appeal to toughness was made on a personal level, as in the lyrics to the rhythm'n'blues song, Duke of Earl by Earl Edwards, Eugene Dixon and Bernice Williams:

As I walk through this world

Nothing can stop the Duke of Earl

And you are my girl

And no one can hurt you

let me hold you,

'Cause I'm the Duke of Earl.⁵⁹

By the mid-1960s, though, during the more passive days of LSD and "flower-power", toughness had lost some of its value. In this Skip Spence lyric, Motorcycle Irene, it was treated ironically:

I've seen her in the bare
Where her tattoos and her chains
Wrap around her body,
Where written are the names
Of prisons she's been in
And lovers she has seen
Curve-winding, bumping, grinding
Motorcycle Irene.⁶⁰

In recent years this appeal has returned in a yet more generalized way than in the 1950s. Albums are packaged to look "tough". Wishbone Ash's New England album shows a scene in black and white that is reminiscent of a concentration camp. In the foreground a man is carving a pointed stick with his knife blade turned towards the viewer. The Mind Exploding album, by Lucifer's Friend, shows a snake with its jaws open wide, its fangs bared and rings of thorns surrounding its head. The entire image seems to rise from a firey ocean like a smoke from a nuclear bomb. Within Reach's album (untitled) shows a hand in a tight leather glove grasping a talisman formed like an eye. Boxer's Below The Belt album depicts a naked woman with a boxing glove seemingly punching her in the navel. Target's album (untitled) shows a wildcat,

its fangs bared, snarling at the viewer through openings in a striped target. Roderick Falconer's New Nation album, described earlier, depicts a jack-booted man strutting in front of a stairway that leads up to a steely-grey emblem.

The lyrics of many of the more recent rock bands also herald a return to a new strength, as with those by drummer Neil Peart recorded by Rush for its 2112 album:

You don't get something for nothing

You don't get freedom for free

You won't get wise

With the sleep still in your eyes

No matter what your dreams might be.⁶¹

Yet these projections of toughness and power are only completed at live performance where bands like Rush or Black Sabbath and others mentioned earlier call upon the audience to stand up and wave their fists in time to the metre of a song. The apparent aim at such performances is to forge a unity with the music and the audience.

Protest

In the 1960s protest songs were generally more specific than those being written in the 1970s. The civil-rights movement and the anti-Vietnam war movement, each produced a number of songs, from Bob Dylan's My Back Pages, to Bill Frederick's Burn, Baby, Burn, Buffy

Saint-Marie's My Country, 'Tis of Thy People You're Dying to Ronnie Petersen's War Blues. Protest material now, that is, those lyrics which contain some statement of dissatisfaction, is usually directed at society as a whole. With the punk rock performers like the Ramones and the Talking Heads or the Sex Pistols, the very presence of the performer is its own form of protest; that is, the performer comes to embody the very things he hates. Frequently too, the oppression and violence the songwriter finds around him are met only with his resignation. As indicated in Fred Turner's Gimme Your Money Please, recorded by the Bachman-Turner Overdrive:

Being born and raised in New York
There ain't nothin' you won't see
'Cause the streets are filled
with bad goings-on

And you know that's no place to be
But my car broke down in the evenin'
You know it just stopped stone cold,
stopped stone cold in the street

And a dirty mean man with a shotgun
in his hand

Said, "Gimme your money, please."
He said, "Gimme your money please."

Wasn't that strange?
Wasn't that strange indeed?⁶²

Even when a songwriter does address himself to changing that which he dislikes, his solutions are often vague. Poet-songwriter Roderick Falconer describes his album, New Nation, as a "summoning of musical force, an assault designed to overcome the decadence of contemporary music, and replace it with a new order". Yet nowhere does Falconer (Rod Taylor) explain how he intends to implement this "new order."⁶³

Sexism

Because most rock bands are all-male ensembles and because both the record and radio industries are male-dominated, rock has been a male-oriented music. From Chuck Berry in the late 1950s singing about "sweet little sixteen" with her "tight dresses and lipstick" to the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger claiming his woman "is under my thumb," women have been seen as desirable objects in an all-male world. This trend has abated somewhat in the 1970s, with the appearance of more women songwriters (from Joni Mitchell to Sylvia Tyson) and with to some increased understanding between the sexes. Yet among heavy-metal bands -- bands which appeal mainly to young, white males -- sexism is still very much in evidence. Steven Tyler's and Joe Perry's lyric Walk This Way for the heavy-metal band, Aerosmith, provides an example:

Back stroke lover always hiding
'neath the covers
Till I talked to my daddy he'd say
He said, "You ain't seen nothin'
Till you go down on a muffin
Then you're sure to be a-changing
your way."
I met a cheerleader was a real young
bleeder
Oh the times I could reminisce
Cuz the best things of lovin'
With her sister and her cousin
Only started with a little kiss
Like this.⁶⁴

The sheer volume of sound used by bands like Aerosmith, too, seems to appeal to males more than females. As one young female fan recently noted, "I'd just be too scared to go to one of those gigs. It's like being in a boys' gym at school. I always have the feeling anything could happen to me."⁶⁵

Popular Music As a Reflection of Social Violence

Frequently the image created by the makers of pop music today is deliberately designed to portray the world as a violent, chaotic place, and the world of pop music in particular as being one filled with violence. Recent stage acts mounted by the San Francisco-based band The Tubes, and New York-based singer Lou Reed have used various forms of media, from television sets to overhead projections, to portray states of violence or apathy. In two recent "rock movies", the inner workings of the rock world have been shown in a negative way. In The Phantom of the Paradise, a would-be songwriter has to sell his soul to the devil in order to achieve his desires; in the Rocky Horror Picture Show there is a bisexual, singing Dr. Frankenstein character. Both films are treated in an almost comic-book manner, with both characterization and action so stylized that an aura of

unreality is constant throughout.

This sense of unreality pervades many of the live performances given by current rock bands. The members of Kiss, for instance, appear to be comic-book characters. Yet this unreality is given the stamp of reality through the music itself.

CONCLUSIONS

Rock has always been and will likely remain an aggressive kind of music, one that may be violent at times. It can be argued that it should be this way, that it should indeed be a music that keeps its audience awake to the world around it. There is less to be feared from this kind of music than there is from the kind that drugs its listeners by constantly repeating such fraudulently civilizing notions as the need for the "good life", or the ability to find perfect happiness from idealized romance. The problems that do exist come not so much from the musicians or the music itself, but from those who package and sell this music, and who do not care what the effect of this packaging may be.

Rock, or at least elements of it, is now the mainstream music in North American life, where it was once only an alternative to the mainstream music. To some degree, then, it has become as much an establishment music as that which it replaced in the 1950s. Yet to another degree it still manages to embrace widely divergent tastes and reflect vastly different social groups. Rock, is in fact, many musics, all of which are contemporary with still other forms, such as rhythm'n'blues, reggae, folk, jazz, blues and country, to name but a few. There is a great hunger for this music and it is this very need that is all too often taken advantage of. Promoters know that people will come to

concerts no matter how badly organized these concerts are; record companies know people will buy their product as long as it is packaged in an appealing way.

Two phenomena have emerged from this process. On the one hand, much of rock has become softer, more homogenized and, in a sense, safer in order to appeal to as large an audience as possible -- the new mainstream. On the other hand, there is another portion of the rock audience, usually a younger audience, that wants rock to be as vital and as electrifying as it once was, and that rejects the mainstream kind of rock. This is the most volatile portion of the rock audience and it is to this portion that groups like Kiss aims their appeal. Now, it should be noted that Kiss and the more macabre routines of Alice Cooper have a comic-book quality -- a style that is two-dimensional which is not taken all that seriously by its audience. Yet the death- or fascisistic-images reveal a certain discontent on the part of the audience and, in turn, fuel this discontent. What is even more disturbing, however, is that the people behind these images, those who create and market them, are trading on this content and are not concerned with its roots or its consequences. Rock has become such big business that the people who create it are more and more removed from those who consume it. The people on the stage and the people in the audience are strangers to one another. This has only increased the ability of the former to manipulate the latter. It is this process of manipulation that represents the true violence in popular music today.

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Copyright BMI Canada. Eventide Music (CAPAC) .
63. In an interview with the writer.
64. Steven Tyler and Joe Perry (for Aerosmith).
Baskel Music (BMI Canada) .
65. In an interview with the writer.

DISCOGRAPHY

Aerosmith, Rocks (Columbia PC-34165).

This band is one of the more popular "heavy-metal" groups now touring (the term "heavy-metal" generally refers to a very loud, simplistic brand of rock which, to many of its listeners, represents a return to the music's basic style). Aerosmith appeals to a young, white, mostly male audience who appreciate the sheer toughness of the sound. The lyrics of Aerosmith's material usually deal with frustration in one form or another.

Alice Cooper, Welcome To My Nightmare (Atlantic 18130).

This album is, in a sense, the soundtrack of a recent touring show. In the act Cooper, the protagonist, is beset by living representations of nightmarish images -- spiders, monsters, etcetera. To some extent, this is comic-strip horror (Cooper at one point in the show dances with some skeletons), yet Cooper spent no little time and money trying to make these effects seem as gruesome as possible.

Black Sabbath, Sabotage Warner Brothers 2822

Black Sabbath, Technical Ecstasy Warner Brothers 2969

Black Sabbath, We Sold Our Soul Warner Brothers 2923

The attempt on these three albums is to convince listeners that the band is part of some evil cult. Each concert is devised as some sort of arcane ritual.

Blue Oyster Cult, On Your Feet Columbia KG-33371

Another "black" cult band. The group began its career parodying this very image, yet when younger fans started taking it all seriously, so did the band. Their record jackets have featured cultish symbols with stylized crosses and dark colours.

David Bowie, Changesonebowie. RCA APL1-1723.

Bowie considers his lyrics as the most important aspect of his music: they are given high relief in most songs. The themes he usually deals with include the "deadness" of the modern world and the resulting futility. Bowie presents an androgynous image on stage and has frequently talked about his bisexuality.

Fanny, Fanny Reprise S-6416

One of the first rock albums by an all-female band, it is also one of the few to offer a genuinely feminine perspective in an otherwise male-dominated and male-oriented medium.

Roderick Falconer (Rod Taylor), New Nation

United Artists LA651-G

Falconer prefers a very hard image, one that deliberately recalls those of World War II totalitarians. His songs -- particularly the title song from this album attack things he sees as "decadent", including long-haired youth and the power of the media.

Kiss, Alive Casablanca 7020

Kiss, Destroyer Casablanca 7016

The liner notes used for the Alive album includes bass player Gene Simmons' words to his fans. "Dear victim," Simmons writes, "I love to do all those deliciously painful things to you that make you writhe and groan in ecstasy. My spiked seven-inch boot heels are at the ready should you be in the mood for heavy sport." Kiss's music serves to orchestrate this theme, although there are also some more generalized lyrics about growing up and about love. But the lyrics and the rest of the music -- simple chords played at a very high volume -- are merely there to set the mood for the band's stage act, which includes the vomiting of fake blood and fire-breathing.

Kraftwerk, Radio-Activity. Capitol ST-1145.

An album of metallic noises seeking to emphasize the supposedly deadening conditions of life today.

Bob Marley And The Wailers, Natty Dread. Island 9281

Although Marley is a Rastafarian and, therefore devoted to a peaceful way of life, his songs deal with the harsh poverty in Jamaica, an oppressive society and the occasional need for violence against that society.

The Ramones, Ramones Sire 7520.

Part of the New York City-based "punk rock" movement, the Ramones play a kind of simplistic, repetitive music which, according to one description, "underscores the calculated banality of their image with ripples of violence and squalls of frustration." An off-shoot of this so-called "blank generation" of bands is a kind of rock called "puke rock" in which the members of the band vomit on stage as part of their act.

Lou Reed, Metal Machine Music RCA LPL-11-1

Reed is another New York-based "punk rocker", but one who takes a more literate approach to his music. The themes of his music are concerned

with the anarchy and wildness found in the streets of the big cities today. His music, therefore, is deliberately chaotic.

Rush, Caress of Steel. Mercury SRM-1-1046

Rush. 2112 Mercury SRM-1-1079

Rush is another "heavy metal" band that appeals chiefly to young, white males. Their lyrics, when they deal with women, are sexist in tone, while their music is appreciated for its sheer strength. Rush's music is an exercise in aural brutality.

Rod Stewart, Night On The Town. Warner Brothers 2938.

Stewart's songs are frequently concerned with love and sex, yet always - especially in the hit, Tonight's The Night, from this album - the songs emphasize the male's supremacy over the female.

The Rolling Stones, Let It Bleed. London NPS-4

This album is the Stones' answer - in the title, at least -- to the Beatles' passive Let It Be album. The lyrics are full of warning of "bad times coming down".

Donna Summer, Love To Love You. Oasis.

Full of orgiastic panting and puffing,
this disco-album has been described as "pop porn".

Thin Lizzy, Fighting. Mercury SRM1-1108

This music is a call to strength: assertive,
ultra-masculine images dominate throughout.

The Tubes, Young and Rich. A & M Records 4580

This San Francisco-based band, using a variety
of media on stage, celebrate the crudeness and
chaos of civilization.

Wild Cherry, Wild Cherry. Epic PE-34195

This is a rather straightforward disco album:
that is, it is well-orchestrated dance music.
Yet, in several of the songs the words take on a
racist tone, as in "play that funky music, white
boy, or"

The Phantom Of the Paradise (Soundtrack) A & M 3653.

A parody of Phantom of The Opera, this work por-
trays the music industry as a brutal, hellish
world in which one must sell one's soul in order
to succeed.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show (Soundtrack) Ode 77026

Bisexuality and homosexuality are emphasized by
the lyrics.

